



# **Application of the Federal Character Principle and Improved Integration in the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria: A Study Of Selected Federal Ministries In Anambra State**

<sup>1</sup>Chidolue, Dorothy Nkechi (PhD); <sup>2</sup>Chidi Emmanuel Nwokike (PhD) & <sup>3</sup>Ezeneme, Ebele Victoria (PhD)

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Administration  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Administration  
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University  
Igbariam Campus- Anambra State, Nigeria  
[nwokikechidi@gmail.com](mailto:nwokikechidi@gmail.com)/ +2348063922448

<sup>3</sup>Department of Political Science  
Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Nigeria

## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined the application of the Federal Character Principle and improved integration in the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria. Integration is essentially nation-building programs in which dysfunctional or unstable or "failed states" or economies are given assistance in the development of governmental infrastructure, civil society, dispute resolution mechanisms, as well as economic assistance, in order to increase stability. The study relied heavily on primary and secondary data, and a survey research method was used to examine the application of the Federal Character principle and improve integration. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Findings of the study showed that the Federal character principle impacts on national integration and has not improved the Federal civil service integration in Nigeria. To achieve improved integration, the principle of federal character should be applied with less stringency but with fairness among states and local governments that are homogenous, to avoid creating division where none may have existed.

**Keywords:** Federal Character Principle, Civil Service, Federalism, Derivation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic state. The northern part is occupied by the Hausas with Islam as their religion, while the southern part is occupied by the Igbos, Yorubas, etc. with Christianity and other indigenous religions. In spite of all these differences, the British government unified the various peoples under a common administration in 1914. Since then, the country has had to deal with issues like how to deal with diversity, how to be inclusive, and how to build national unity among the many different groups that make up the country.

However, although the leadership and citizens of Nigeria acknowledged the need for equity, there were no specific guidelines for the realization of fairness. In addition, there was no defined procedure for sharing resources and manpower with the central government. Over time, many citizens and various sections of the nation began to feel excluded, marginalized, and ignored in the scheme of things in the nation (Gberevbie and Ibitetan, 2013). Thus, the quota system as a national policy was reviewed in 1967

and adopted. Ironically, the policy was put into place without having the body that was supposed to be in charge of it.

With the disruption of the democratic process of the second Republic, upon which the 1979 constitution was based, the Federal character principle was affected as various military governments clearly ignored the principle both in appointments and in the allocation of resources. For years, crises arising from deprived sectors and sections of the nation have been known to disrupt the peaceful co-existence of Nigerians for years. It was against this background that the Federal Character Commission was established in 1996, after the Constitutional Conference of 1995 recommended it. The problem ethnicity poses is that political competition and access to power are overtly drawn along ethnic lines. Since Nigerian Federalism is based on ethnic, not geopolitical diversities, it has tended to exacerbate centrifugal forces in the country (Majekodunm, 2013). The post-colonial effort to build genuine Federalism through various policies has witnessed failures, including the Federal Character principle. The failure to build genuine federalism by political elites has created problems for the proper operation of the federal system of Nigeria (Majekodunm, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic state, like many sub-Saharan African states. The Federal Character principle emphasizes equal representation of people from different sections of the country based on merit, political consideration, and government discretion. The perennial problem of unintegration in our national life has revolved around unimproved integration, which prompted the research to investigate the issues relating to the improved integration of the Federal Civil Service in implementing the Federal Character Principle. The fundamental and striking issue is that of the quota system in our national life. Many policies and institutions have been set up to fix what people think are flaws in how resources are shared. These include the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission and the Derivation Fund, which the Niger Delta region has been pushing for. There had been a lot of noise in the National Assembly about the derivation formulae.

As a result of this, gross misconduct in the area of employment due to sectional consciousness and nepotism from those in authority in Ministries, Departments, and Parastatals abounds (Okoye, 2002). Federal institutions appear to recruit based on nepotism, oblivious to the effect of such practices on the efficiency of improved integration and quality of output for the nation. When the Federal Character principle is observed, the employers do not consider the efficiency of the candidates because they are their relatives, and hence do not follow the due process. Job seekers, according to Ibike (2012), get frustrated because they are asked to pay either in cash, in kind, or both to gain employment for a job they know that they are qualified for. More so, the feature of Nigeria's politics is the intense elite group struggle for power among the different ethnic groups in the country. Some groups in the country have been neglected since the country's independence without any national leader coming from such units. People assumed that elective positions should be conducted on the basis of the Federal Character principle, which should have been on "who the cap fits," hence the problem of power shift.

All these problems being encountered as a result of the arbitrary application of the principle without stringent penalties seem to be brewing acrimony and rivalry among the contending groups. It doesn't look like the goals of the Federal Character principle are being met in Nigeria the way the principle is being used.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to examine the application of the Federal Character principle and improve integration in the Federal Civil Service in Anambra State.

Specifically, the study seeks to

1. To examine the impact of the Federal Character principle on integration in the Federal civil service.
2. To investigate whether the principle has improved integration in the Federal Civil service.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this paper:

1. How does the Federal Character principle impact on Federal civil service integration?
2. How does the application of the Federal Character principle improve integration in Nigeria's Federal Civil Service?

### **Hypotheses**

1. Ho: The principle of the Federal character does not impact on National integration when applied in the Federal civil service in the recruitment of personnel.
2. Ho: The application of the Federal character principle has not improved National integration in the Federal Civil service.

### **Concept Clarification**

#### **Federal Character Principle**

Federal Character as a concept belongs to the "tribe" of contested concepts. The federal character is a deliberate design to accommodate less dominant but frequently coerced expressed interests. Ezeibe (2012) posits that the Federal Character principle involves a deliberate plan to construct a means of ensuring the proper distribution of amenities and government projects in the country. According to the definitions above, federal character was introduced where differences in culture, tradition, and inequality have been observed, whether in human, natural, or both. Character principle is a palliative principle aimed at uniting once-existing autonomous sub-nationalities through a quota system for purposes of equality of opportunity and peaceful co-existence.

In Nigeria, a number of problems confront and complicate integration. For example, poor or faulty recruitment policies lead to poor selection of human capital coupled with corruption and decayed infrastructure. The quality and availability of essential services are major indicators of good governance because public integration underpins the social contract between the state and its citizens, which in turn reflects a healthy society. With a healthy society, invariably, there tends to be improved integration.

### **Review of Extant Literature**

To ensure equity in representation, the law establishing the Commission states that the Executive Chairman and Secretary are to be appointed in such a way that if the Chairman comes from the North, the Secretary must be chosen from the South and vice versa to address the issue of representation. Adeoti and Olaniyan (2014) observed that "rather than strengthening National Unity, the principle of Federal Character unfortunately enthrones unintegration". Furthermore, Udoh (2014), in dissecting the decadence in the country today, concluded that the basis and wrong application of the Federal Character principle threatens to drag Nigeria backwards. This, in effect, breeds nepotism and inefficiency instead of meritocracy.

There was a highly biased method of distribution of state resources where a public officer preferred his relatives and family members or friends in job recruitment, promotion, and appointment to public positions, thereby ignoring the merit principle; this had led to the downgrading of the quality of the public service (Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, 2010). It also included exempting one's relatives and friends from the application of certain punitive laws or regulations that could jeopardize the spirit of corps and trust. Nepotism provides room for "preferential treatment of one individual over another, without taking into account the relative merit of respective individuals. This represents nothing but the victimization of an individual or individuals "(Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, 2010). In the civil service, organizational structure does not in itself guarantee improved integration.

### **Review of Empirical Literature**

Igbokwe-Ibeto, Agbodike and Anazodo (2015) carried out research on the application of the federal character principle and its implications on service delivery in the Nigerian federal civil service. The study heavily relied on both primary and secondary data while a multistage sampling technique was adopted to select the sample. The researchers also used the Pearson chi-square test of goodness to test the hypotheses. Analysis of the study showed that there is a strong relationship between federal character

principles and employee service delivery as well as a poor attitude towards work by bureaucrats. Based on the findings stated above, the researchers recommended that the government should strictly adhere to the Marx Weber bureaucratic theory as regards recruitment based on merit and reassess the workability of the application of the federal character principle in the Nigerian federal civil service.

Ugoh and Ukpere (2012) conducted research on the policy of the federal character principle and conflict management in Nigerian federalism. The researchers adopted a content analysis method using mostly secondary data retrieved from the internet, government publications, and official documents. The origin of federalism was traced to two major schools of thought. The first school believed that British colonists imposed federalism on Nigeria for her economic and political benefits. The second school argued that Nigerian federalism was a result of historical and geographical factors. Findings indicated that despite the effort by the previous government to promote and build genuine federalism through the federal character principle, it has created problems.

Gberevbie and Ibitetan (2013) conducted research on the Federal Character Principle and administrative effectiveness in the Federal Civil Service; challenges and prospects for sustainable development, 1999–2012. The main argument in their study was that the introduction of the Federal Character principle and its implementation had failed to bring into the Federal Civil Service a competent and motivated workforce that could support administrative effectiveness for enhanced performance in the implementation of government policies for sustainable integration. It observed that the Federal Character principle as practiced in Nigeria diverts emphasis from merit to sharing privileges and benefits accruable from representative bureaucracy, and this limits integration. The application of the Federal Character principle runs contrary to some features of the Weberian bureaucratic model of rationality in the procurement and promotion of employees as key planks upon which formal organizations should be built. This state of affairs impinges on administrative effectiveness and the expected role of public bureaucracies in policy implementation. In practice, the Federal Character principle does not work well because it makes the country less integrated instead of more united, which is what its proponents wanted when they came up with it as a way to deal with the problem of having equal representation for people from different groups of society in a multi-ethnic state like Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

### Area of Study

The researchers adopted the survey research design in carrying out this study. It involves the collection of data (Respondents' opinion) from selected sample, study the sample for the purpose of making generalization about the entire population.

An investigation was carried out in the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing and the Ministry of Information and Culture in Anambra State. These ministries are located in the Awka South Local Government Area that houses the capital of Anambra State. Awka South is made up of public and civil servants, businessmen and farmers. Awka town is known for its prowess in blacksmithing, while the other towns in Awka South are predominantly farmers. The towns that make up the Awka South Local Government Area are; Awka, Isiagu, Umuawulu, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise, Amawbia, Okpuno, and Ezinato. Urbanization has almost eroded their village life, as most towns are within the Awka Capital Territory.

### Population of the Study, Sample Size, Sampling Technique and Sources of Data

The population of this study is made up of the management and senior staff of the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing and the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture. Below is the breakdown of the population of the study:

**Table 1: Population of Study**

S/N	Ministries	Population
1	Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing	388
2	Federal Ministry of Information and Culture	343
<b>Total</b>		<b>731</b>

Source: Field Survey 2022.

Therefore, the population of this study is **731**.

The sample for the study was selected from two Federal Ministries — Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing and the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture. Given a population of 731 (Seven hundred and thirty-one) Civil servants. The sample size for each ministry was determined using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The formula is stated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N (e)^2}$$

Where n = the relevant population sought  
 N = the total number of civil servant in each Ministry  
 e = sampling error (5% in this case)

**Table 2: Sample Size Allocation to the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing and Federal Ministry of Information and Culture**

S/No	Federal Ministry	Population	Sample
1.	Power, Works and Housing	388	197
2.	Information and Culture	343	185
	<b>Total</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>382</b>

**Source: (Field Work, 2022)**

The population was proportionately stratified according to the two Federal Ministries. The reason for the technique was to ensure that each ministry was sampled based on their strength.

The study relied on primary and secondary sources of data. A structured questionnaire and interviews were used to collect primary data. The structured questionnaire was done in such a way that it harnessed relevant information in the area of study through its coverage. In addition to filling out a questionnaire, information was also gathered from the respondents by talking to them. This interaction was done to get information about how well or how poorly the Federal character principle and service delivery in the Federal civil service worked and how difficult it was to use this principle. The research also made use of secondary data gathered from textbooks, journals, commentary/news, magazines, websites (internet) and unpublished works of others in related fields of study. These documents facilitated and helped the researcher.

#### **Method of Data Analysis**

The simple percentage and chi square (x) tests of independence were used to analyse the data. All tests were carried out at a 0.05 level of significance and 22 degrees of freedom. The probability level (x being the confidence level for type 1 error)

#### **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

This section presents, analyzes, and discusses the data that was collected. The Likert scale format was applied and the research questions were answered through percentage analysis, while hypotheses were tested through the application of chi-square (x test of independence).

A theoretical mean value of 3.0 was taken as a criterion to judge the mean for the items in the respective sections. Therefore, any item in the instrument which had a mean that was equal or higher than 3.0 was taken as agreed, while the items that were less than 3.0 were taken as disagreed. Some management and senior staff were sampled and interviewed.

### Research Question 1

This research question sought to know if the Federal character principle is being applied towards National integration. The opinions of the respondents are presented in table 4:

**Table 4: Application of the Federal Character Principle towards National Integration.**

<b>Determinative Response</b>							
S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	UND	Total
1	The Federal civil service applies Federal character principle in for National integration	200 (57.1)	78 (22.3)	43 (12.3)	15 (4.3)	14 (4)	350 100
2	The integration in the Federal civil service is done ate centre	210 (6)	68 (19.4)	40 (11.4)	14 (4)	18 (5.1)	350 100
3	The Application of Federal character principle in National integration had led to lopsidedness in the representation of all the federating units in the country.	210 (60)	68 (19.4)	40 (11.4)	14 (4)	18 (5.1)	350 100
4.	The Civil service had improved National integration through the application of the Federal character principle	180 (51.4)	72 (21)	54 (15.4)	20 (6)	24 (7)	350 100

Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentages

### Research Question 2

This question sought to find out the effects of the application of the Federal character principle and improve National integration in the Federal Civil service.

**Table 5: Application of the Federal Character Principle and improve National Integration in the Federal civil service**

<b>Determinative Response</b>							
S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	UND	Total
1	The application of the Federal character principle in the Federal civil service improves National integration	84 (24)	25 (7)	88 (25)	100 (29)	53 (15)	350 100
2	The sacrifice of integration on the altar of Federal character principle hampers National building.	170 (49)	90 (26)	53 (15)	25 (7)	12 (3)	350 100
3	Marginalization of some part of the federating unit led to suspicion	92 (26)	160 (46)	70 (20)	20 (6)	8 (2)	350 100
4.	Strict application of Federal character principle leads to unimproved integration.	190 (54.3)	88 (25.1)	14 (4)	40 (11.4)	18 (5.1)	330 100

### Research Hypothesis One

This seeks to find out if the application of the Federal character principle impacts on the National integration in the Federal civil service. Below is the Null and Alternative Hypotheses.

Ho: The principle of the Federal character does not impact on National integration when applied in the Federal civil service in the recruitment of personnel.

Hi: The principle of the Federal character impact on National integration when applied in the Federal civil service.

To test the hypothesis, chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was applied to the data on table. The test was carried out at 0.05 level of significance and 34 degrees of freedom.

**Table 6: Summary of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) for Hypothesis 1**

Variables	Sample size (n)	Degree of Freedom	Chi-square $\chi^2$ $\chi^2_{cal}$	Value $\chi^2_{crit}$	Significance level $\alpha$	Decision rule significant
Ethnicity and the Federal civil service	388	34	27.27	45.9	0.05	Accepted

**Note:**  $\chi^2_{cal}$  means the value of  $\chi$  calculated and  $\chi^2_{crit}$  means critical value of  $\chi^2$

#### Decision Rule

At 0.05 level of significance and 34 degree of freedom, the value of  $\chi^2_{calculated}$  (27.27) is less than the value of  $\chi^2_{critical}$  (45.9). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis which state that principle of Federal character improves National integration in the Federal Civil Service was accepted.

#### Research Hypothesis Two

This sought to find out if the application of the Federal character principle has improved National integration in the Federal Civil service. Below is the Null and Alternative Hypotheses.

Ho: The application of the Federal character principle has not improved National integration in the Federal Civil service.

Hi: The application of the Federal character principle has improved integration in the Federal Civil service.

To test the hypothesis, chi-square  $\chi$  test of independence was applied to the data on table. The test was carried out at 0.005 level of significance and 34 degrees of freedom.

**Table 7: Summary of chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) for Hypothesis 2**

Variables	Sample size (n)	Degree of Freedom	Chi-square $\chi^2$ $\chi^2_{cal}$	Value $\chi^2_{crit}$	Significance level $\alpha$	Decision rule significant
Improved service delivery and the Federal Civil service	388	34	56.27	45.9	0.05	Accepted

**Note:**  $\chi^2_{cal}$  means the value of  $\chi$  calculated and  $\chi^2_{crit}$  means critical value of  $\chi^2$

#### Decision Rule

At 0.05 level of significance and 34 degrees of freedom, the value of  $\chi$  calculated (56.27) is greater than the value of  $\chi$  critical (45.9). Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that the application of the Federal character principle has not improved integration in the Federal Civil Service, was accepted while the alternative hypothesis was rejected.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the course of this research work, it was found that the principle of federal character impacts on national integration when applied in the Federal Civil Service. This was confirmed by Ugoh and Ukpere (2012), who state that the federal character principle has created more problems. In the same vein, (Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (2010) opined that the "state resource distribution method is highly biased where a public officer prefers his relatives and family members or friends in job recruitment and promotion, thus enthrone unimproved integration. As the federal character principle is being inappropriately applied, it leads to tribal dominance by the major groups, even though the goal is to prevent sectional dominance. Adeoti and Olaniyan (2014) observed that rather than strengthening national unity, the principle unfortunately "enthrones ethnicity."

Furthermore, the application of the Federal Character principle has not improved integration in the Federal Civil Service. Udoh (2014) said "in dissecting the decadence in the country today, opined that it threatens to drag Nigeria backwards by breeding inefficiency instead of meritocracy." According to Igbokwe-Ibeto, Agbodike and Anazodo (2015), the Federal Character Principle promotes mediocrity and incompetence in the public service.

## CONCLUSION

We, therefore, conclude that it is a known fact that the principle has gone a long way to reducing various factors of mutual mistrust (suspicion) and rivalries among the Federal civil servants that make up the geographical entity called Nigeria. In reality, the challenge of unintegration brought about by the application of this principle needs to be effectively curbed if the benefits of this principle are to be realized. This would be achieved by the reformation of the principle from its present status quo so as to give succor to the weak and marginalized and also limit the power of the strong. Proper application of the Federal Character principle is pivotal and absolutely necessary for improved integration of the country. Everyone in the country should be consulted about this policy and be a part of making it happen.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made from the findings of the research:

1. Federal civil servants should be chosen and promoted based on their abilities and professionalism in order to have an effective and efficient federal civil service in Nigeria as a government tool for better integration and long-term development.
1. The federal government should pass a law to back up the Federal Character Principle and make sure that everyone who breaks it is punished by law.

## REFERENCES

- Adenike, O.C., & David I. (2013). Towards national integration in Nigeria: jumping the hurdles. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(9), <https://www.iiste.org>
- Adenoke, M. (2013) . Federal character principle as a recipe for national integration in Nigeria. An overview. *International Journal Of Advanced Research In Management And Social Sciences*, 2(6), <https://www.graph.co.uk>
- Adeosun, A.B (2011), "Federal Character Principle and National Integration: A Critical appraisal. *International Journal f Politics and Good Governance*, 2(7), 1-13. <https://www.onlineresearchjournals.com>
- Adeoti, S.O. & Olaniyan, S.B. (2014). Ethnicity and national integration in Nigeria: a historical an overview. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 2(6), 65084. <https://www.graph.co.uk> on 28/8/20 14.
- Anazodo, R.O. (2008). The Effects of the 1988 Civil Service Reform on the Effective and And efficient service delivery in Anambra state public service 1988-1994. Unpublished PhD. Research Work delivered at Nnamdi .Azikiwe University, Awka.
- Anyadike, N.O. (2Q13). Contemporary Issues in the Management of Nigeria's Fiscal appraisal. *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, 2(7), -13. [https:// www.onlinereserachjournals.com/ijopagg/on 26/8/2014](https://www.onlinereserachjournals.com/ijopagg/on 26/8/2014)
- Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (2010). Ethical Dilemmas in the Public Service. [https://www.capam.org/\\_documents/2010101875238.pdf](https://www.capam.org/_documents/2010101875238.pdf)
- Ezeibe, C.C. (2012). Federal Character Principle and Nationality Question in Nigeria. <https://www.academicexcellencesociety.com/federal-character-principle-and-nationality-question-in-nigeria>
- Ezenwile, Uche (2012). "Maintenance of Public Infrastructural Facilities in Anambra State: a study of Awka South. Unpublished MSc research Work Delivered at Anambra State University, Igbariam Campus
- Federal Character Commission (2014) "Guiding principle [www.federal character. gov.ng](http://www.federalcharacter.gov.ng)



- Gberevbie, D.E. & Ibitetan, J. (2013). Federal character principle and administrative effectiveness in the Nigerian public service: challenges and prospects for sustainable development, 1999-2012. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 15(6), 46-61.  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267748745>
- Igbokwe-Ibeto, C. J., Agbodike, F. C. & Anazodo R. O. (2015). The Application of Federal Character Principle and Its Implication on Service Delivery in Nigerian Federal Civil Service. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 2015, 5(3).1-22. <https://www.macrothink.org/ijhrs/innigeria.html>.
- Kerlinger, F. (1997), *Foundation of Behavioural Research*; New York: bit Inc.
- Majekodunmi, A (2013), "Federal Character Principle As a Recipe for National Integration in management in Nigerian federalism. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6 (23). DOI: 10.5897/AJBM12348.
- Methods in political science*, Enugu: Quintagen Publishers.
- Nnabugwu, M.B. (2006), *Methodology of political inquiry: issues and techniques of research*
- Ogunrotifa, A.B. (2012), "Federal Civil Service Reform in Nigeria: The case of Democratic
- Oguonu, C.N. & Anyawam, E.E. (2012), *Fundamentals of Research in Social Sciences: overview*. *International Journal in Management and Social Science*, 2(2) 104-120. <https://www.ijmr.neton/2/9/2014>.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary: International Student's Edition (New 8<sup>th</sup> Edition). Prince Publications.
- Udoh, D.A. (2014). *Federal Character Principle: House of Reps and the Presidential Scholarship*.
- Ugoh, S.C. & Ukpere, W.I. (2012). *Policy of the federal character principle and conflict*  
 Unpublished Ph.D. Research Work delivered at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.